

Chap. N^o 6
A
SERMON

Preach'd at the
PARISH-CHURCHES
OF
St. ALPHAGE, in Canterbury,
AND
BREAKSBOURN, in Kent.
ON

Friday, December 16, 1720.

Being the

Day appointed by HIS MAJESTY, for
a General Fast and Humiliation, for obtaining the
Pardon of our Sins, and averting the heavy Judg-
ments we have deserv'd; and particularly for be-
seeching GOD to preserve us from the Plague.

By THO. WISE, D.D. One of the Six Preachers at
Canterbury, Prebendary of Lincoln, and Chaplain
to Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales.

LONDON: Printed for E. Bell, at the Cross Keys and
Bible in Cornhill. M DCC XXI.

*vicar of Beakborne of
Oct. 24 1720*

SERMON

2012-12-12

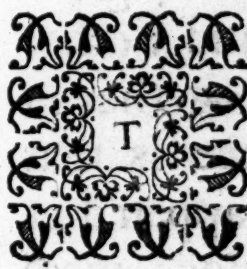
Видеосъёмка: А.А.А.А.А.

BRITISH LABOR



LUKE xiii. 2, 3.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such Things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

 HIS Passage is connected with what goes before, and is back'd with a Parallel in what follows after; so that the whole, as laid altogether, runs thus, *There were present at that Season some that told him of the Galileans, whose Blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices; and Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such Things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom*

the Tower of Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were Sinners above all Men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

In which Words of the Text and Context we have Two Instances of Temporal Judgments, that befell some Persons, when others, tho' undoubtedly as sinful, yet were not visited with the same. The first Instance is of those, *whose Blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices*; that is, of *those Galileans*, who being come to *Jerusalem*, at the Passover, and then suspected by *Pilate* of refusing to pay Tribute to the *Roman Emperor*, were therefore set upon and slain by him, in the very Temple, while they were offering Sacrifice; so that the Blood of one and t'other being at once pour'd out, run both together in a mingled Stream. The other Instance is that of a Disaster which had then lately happen'd at *Jerusalem*, to wit, that Eighteen Persons were on a sudden killed there, by the Fall of a Tower upon their Heads.

In reference to both which Instances, our Saviour, to obviate or take off uncharitable Censures, as if the aforesaid Sufferers *were Sinners above all others*, avers the contrary: *Implying* first, that God, for Reasons which Men know
not

not of, may permit or appoint some Persons to be afflicted, or cut off this Way, or that ; and then *expressly* adding, That others, though as yet unpunished, may be, and often are, as criminal as they ; and, therefore, let them also beware, lest they fall under *the like Condemnation* : Let them turn from their evil Ways, which is the only Method to secure them in Peace and Safety, for *except they repent they shall all likewise perish* ; shall, by some Means or other, suffer the same or equal Punishment.

Now, after having thus introduced and open'd the Text I have quoted, the general Use I shall make of it is this : namely to shew, That *When God's Judgments are abroad in the Earth, in any particular Place or Country, then, or in the View thereof, the Inhabitants of the World, or all the World besides, should learn Righteousness, should cease to do evil, learn to do well, and turn from their Sins to God ; having heard the Rod, and who has appointed it, they should not only bear of this, but also fear, and do no more presumptuously.*

In applying which Lesson to our selves, I shall, First, represent the sinful State of our own Nation ; whence I shall, Secondly, Infer the absolute Necessity of our Repentance for it ; to which again, Thirdly, I shall endeavour to incite

incite and move you, in View of those sad Calamities which others have now lately suffered in neighbouring Countries, and which we have great Reason to dread, or that we *shall likewise perish*, as they have, *except we repent*, and so avert God's Anger. First then, as to the Sins of our own Nation; they are, 'tis to be fear'd, both as many and as great, not only as those of *Marseilles* and its Confines, &c. but even as those of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, for which those Cities *perished*; so that the Cry of them has undoubtedly reach'd up to Heaven, and call'd for Vengeance down upon our Heads. This is so visible, so perceivable, to all our Eyes and Consciences, as not to need a curious Search, or long Enquiry, after it. Great Numbers among us are now so impiously bold as to *deny the Lord who bought them*; nay, and the very Lord who made them: And as thus too many have *made Shipwreck of the Faith*, so have they of a good Conscience too. In the most populous Parts of this Kingdom, from which others take the Mode, Vice in all its various Shapes rides triumphant, and meets with general Applause; while Virtue, with a dejected Air, stands discountenanced, discouraged, and has none to take her Part. Now, *what open Violence and Strife*

Strife are seen in the City! Day and Night they go about it, upon the Walls thereof; Mischief also and Sorrow are in the midst of it! Wickedness is in the midst thereof, Deceit and Guile go not out of their Streets! By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing Adultery, they break out, and Blood toucheth Blood. Blasphemy, Perjury, Luxury, Hypocrisy, Drunkenness, Uncleaness, Oppression, Extortion, and whatever else is contrary to sound Doctrine, do now sit paramount among us, and brave the very Sun; are now become fashionable, nay, and almost creditable; and none is thought Good Breeding now, but what is learn'd in Schools of Vice; by which the natural Restraints of Fear and Shame being taken off, Men dare to make a Mock at Sin; nay, to glory in it, and to be ashamed of nothing else but Virtue and Sobriety. Vice and Profaneness, it must be own'd, have had too great a Footing in the World ever since the Beginning of it: But these latter Times seem, if I may so speak, to have refined upon the former, and to have much outdone them in all Sorts of Wickedness. Sins, and Arts of Sinning, which our Forefathers hardly knew of, and would have blush'd at the very Naming, and much more at the Commission of them, are now practis'd with

with open Face abroad, and new ones daily invented ; and this by Persons of all Ranks, all Conditions, and Qualities among us ; so that to use the Prophets *Hyperboles*, with Reference to Vice and Immorality, it may now be too truly said, *the whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart is faint ; we are all gone aside, we are altogether become filthy and abominable ; there is none among us that doeth Good, no not one ; there is no Truth, nor Mercy, nor Knowledge, or Fear of God in the Land.* But Men seem to vie with each other in Hypocrisy and Couzenage, in Cruelty and Impiety, who shall be the greatest Sinner. Now the Case being so, *the Foundations of Virtue being put out of Course,* and the Sinews of Religion, both natural and reveal'd, being thus broke, or weaken'd, what shall we do in the End thereof, or what do we think will be the Issue of it ? *Has not the Lord a just Controuersy with the Inhabitants of this Land ? Will he not visit for these Things, and shall not his Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this ?* A Nation, which God has bless'd as much as any under Heaven ; and which again, when Kindness could not lead, he has sometimes, by Judgments, driven to Repentance ; by Famine, War, and Plague, the Smart and sad Effects whereof, now seem to be forgotten by us : But God in
Mercy

Mercy minds us of them, though not as yet by immediate Inflictions upon our selves, but in bidding us take Warning from what he has now lately done to others, at some Distance from us; in that the Plague, and its Attendant, Famine, have, in a cruel Manner, raged, and swept away vast Numbers of them. But do you think those *Foreigners* to have been Sinners above all other People, because they suffered such Things? And do you fancy that your greater Merit will skreen and save you from the like? *I tell you, nay:* for the same Sword, which God drew at *them*, is still unsheathed, and hangs over your own Heads; and therefore as your Sins are as many and great as theirs, who have already suffered by it, there is just Reason to denounce, that *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Which minds me, Secondly, To shew yet farther the absolute Necessity there is of *Humiliation* and *Repentance*, in Order to appease God's Anger, and avert his Judgments.

2. Now this is what the Text declares without Reserve, saying as to other Nations round about, by the Mouth of him who cannot lie, that *except they repent, they shall all likewise perish.* And, therefore, as we would be accounted *worthy to escape all those Things which shall other-*

wise come to pass, it is our indispensable Duty to turn from our Sins to God, and then to bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.

God, who made us, has an undoubted Right to govern us ; and as accordingly in Fact he governs us, it is by such Laws as are suitable to our Nature ; as therefore he made us *rational* and *religious* Creatures, endued us with a Power to discern between Good and Evil, and with Liberty to chuse the one, and to refuse the other, he has withall *injoin'd* us to *do good*, and to *eschew evil* ; and, accordingly, so far as we break this Injunction, we declare our selves to be his Enemies, as having violated his Laws ; whereupon his *Justice* prompts, nay, even binds him, to vindicate his Honour, and, therefore, to declare and shew his Enmity at us. But what are we in the Hands of *him*, who, as he is Almighty, can either annihilate and destroy us, by a single Nod, or can command the whole Creation, Heaven, Earth, Sea, and Air, and whatever in them is, to fight his Battles, and effect our Ruin. And, moreover, as he stands in Point of *Honour bound*, so does he often execute this, where and how he pleases, in this present World. I say, as he stands in Point of *Honour bound*, in that by sinning against our God, we do

do the greatest *Disbonour* to him ; as will yet further appear by considering how Sin reflects on some of his most glorious Attributes. First, It is, as I have hinted, a plain Invasion of the Divine Authority and Sovereignty over us ; inasmuch as he, who wilfully breaks any Law of God, does thereby, in Effect, proclaim himself lawless, and declare he *will not have this Lord to rule over him.* Secondly, Sin is a tacit Denial of God's Omniscience and Omnipresence : In that the Sinner is suppos'd to say, with those *Libertines, or Free-Thinkers,* the Psalmist speaks of, [*Psal. xxxvii. 11.*] *Tush, doth God see, and is there Knowledge in the Most High? Thick Clouds are a Covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the Circuit of Heaven :* That is, he confines his Residence there, and either is not present with, or does not behold the Things here on Earth. For otherwise the Consideration of an All-seeing Eye, which is in all Places, beholding the Evil and the Good, must needs restrain and curb all Tendencies to Sin, and Men would dread the Commission of it, lest they perish in their Wickedness. Thirdly, Sin is also an Impeachment at once of God's Wisdom, his Justice, and his Goodness, in that he, who dares commit it, does therein lay an Imputation upon

B 2

God,

God, as if he had either not foreseen and stat-
ted what Liberty was fit and proper to be taken
by his Creatures, or else had not contrived and
made the Frame and Settlement of Things, with
that Decency and good Order, in which Man-
kind might comfortably acquiesce, without
Temptation to intrench upon, and violate his
Laws, for their own necessary Accommodation,
and Convenience of Life. Which is, in Effect,
with a presumptuous King of Arragon (*Alphon-
sus*) to tell the All-wise, the infinitely just and
gracious God, how he ought to have made the
World, and how he should still rule it; than
which Height of Insolence, what can be more
derogatory from the *Honour* of his Name?

Whence it follows, That as all Sin is such, in
its own very Nature, as to deserve and call
for Punishment; so no Wonder that God, who
is infinitely just, as well as good, inflicts it as
he pleases, not only in the other World, but
sometimes in this: to deter and frighten others
from Sin and Wickedness, by visible Examples
made of *some*, and so to teach all those who have
hitherto escaped, to apply for Mercy, by turn-
ing from their Sins, that so they may *be saved*;
as, on the other Hand, *except they repent*, they
shall all likewise perish; shall either be suddenly
cut

cut off here, or sentenced to Eternal Misery. This latter comes of course to those, who die in Impenitence, and the former sometimes happens, not to particular Persons only, but to whole Nations and Kingdoms; especially when their Sins having become epidemical and common, God, besides what he will inflict upon them hereafter, does here visit them with Judgments all at once, as they stand join'd together in *Civil Bodies*; so that they are seen to perish in one common Ruin. Besides what we have heard and seen, and what our Fathers have told us, not only Threatnings; but Instances of this, in Fact, may be read at large both in the Sacred Writings, and in other Histories of Times and Places, when and where although God's Grace, and Goodness, had *abounded*, yet *Sin the more abounded*. On which Account the ancient Prophets thunder'd out Vengeance upon the disobedient, and Evil-doers, *lifting up their Voices like Trumpets, to shew Israel their Transgressions, and the House of Jacob their Sins*: That under the Diseases of their Souls, the Causes of them being laid open, they might then take the proper Method to remove them; that is, in applying to themselves the wholesome Medicine of *Repentance*; whereby their *wounded Spirits* being healed,

healed, now they might not die in their Sins, and Iniquity might not be their Ruin. To prevent which also, Moses warned Israel, in the Name of God, saying, If ye shall despise my Statutes, or if your Soul abhor my Judgments, so that ye will not do all my Commandments, but that ye break my Covenant: I also will do this unto you, I will even appoint over, or upon, you, Terror, Consumption, and the burning Ague. And if ye will not be reformed by these Things, but will walk contrary unto me, then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven Times more for your Sins; and I will bring a Sword upon you, that shall avenge the Quarrel of my Covenant; and when ye are gathered together in your Cities, I will send the Pestilence among you, and I will bring the Land into Desolation. [Lev. xxvi. 15, 16, 23, 24, 25, 32.] I my self will fight against you, said God, by another Prophet, with an out-stretched Hand, and with a strong Arm, and in Fury, and in great Wrath; and I will smite the Inhabitants of the City, both Man and Beast; they shall die of a great Pestilence. [Jer. xxi. 5, 6.] The Reason given for it was, he will remember their Iniquity, and will visit their Sins; therefore he will consume them by the Sword, and by Famine, and by Pestilence. [Jer. xiv. 10, 12.] So that, said another

another in the like Case, the Land shall mourn, when the Foundation of it shall be smitten with the Plague and Punishment, that God shall bring upon it, [2 Esdr. xv. 12.] When the dead shall be cast out as Dung, and there shall be no Man to comfort them: for the Earth shall be wasted, and the Cities shall be cast down; there shall be no Man left to till the Earth, and to sow it; the Trees shall give Fruits, and who shall gather them? The Grapes shall ripen, and who shall tread them? For all Places shall be desolate of Men [Chap. xvi. 23, &c.] Wherefore said he again, Hear now these Things and understand them, ye Servants of the Lord: behold, Famine and Plague, Tribulation and Anguish, are sent as Scourges for Amendment. Therefore let the denouncing of them work this upon you, and so either prevent, or remove them. For, behold, God himself is the Judge, fear him; leave off from your Sins, and forget your Iniquities, to meddle no more with them for ever; so shall God lead you forth, and deliver you from all Trouble, [ibid. v. 35, 19, 67.] Agreeable to which is this of Isaiah, Let the wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon, [Isa. lv. 7.] To which Purpose God also spoke by the Mouth of Jeremiah, touching a whole Community, or People:

At

At what Instant I shall speak, concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: If that Nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will then repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them, [Jer. xviii. 7, 8.] Therefore said he again by the same Prophet, why will ye die by the Sword, by the Famine, and by the Pestilence: Implying it to be mainly in their own Power either to prevent, or to avoid it? Agreeable to which is this of Ezekiel, Repent and turn your selves, O House of Israel, from all your Transgressions, so Iniquity shall not be your Ruin; make you a new Heart, and a new Spirit; for why will ye die, O House of Israel. For I have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: Wherefore turn your selves, and live ye. [Ezek. xviii. 30, &c.] Thus far we learn from the ancient Dispensation, what great Necessity there is of Humiliation and Repentance, in Order to appease God's Anger, and avert his Judgments. And now, if we cast our Eyes farther on the new, we shall find this to be all made up of Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That we may flee from, and escape the Wrath to come; God here commands all Men every where to repent, and our Blessed Saviour may be supposed to speak, as in the Text, to all and every

every one of us, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish; as lately did great Numbers at Marseilles, and the Countries near it. Thus was it the Business of the Apostles also, to go and preach that Men should repent; and accordingly they did so, and seconded their Blessed Master, in preaching the Gospel to the unconverted, and calling Sinners to Repentance: saying, Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be done away; draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you; cleanse therefore your selves, ye Sinners, and purify your Hearts, ye double-minded. Agreeable to which is the pious Design of this Day's Solemnity: that we may humble our selves by Fasting and Prayer, and that so, upon our true Repentance, God may not cease to be gracious to us; particularly, that he would not visit us, with the dreadful Calamity of the Plague, with which some Countries beyond the Seas, have been for some Time, and are still grievously afflicted.

Which minds me, Thirdly, To incite and move you further to those Duties, in View of the Disasters, which others have now lately suffered, and which we also have great Reason to dread; or that we shall likewise perish, as they have done, except we repent, and so avert God's Anger. To this

C

Purpose,

Purpose, give me now Leave to speak, as the Prophet did to *Jerusalem*: *Be thou instructed, O Great Britain, lest my Soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited.* [Jer. vi. 8.] Therefore may our Repentance, and the Success of it, answer to that of the *Ninevites*, who, upon the Preaching of *Jonah*, believed God, and proclaimed a Fast, and put on Sack-Cloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. And when God saw their Works, and that they turned from their evil Way, God then repented of the Evil, which he said he would do unto them, and he did it not. [Jon. iii. 5, 10.]

Here, my Brethren, you have seen the End of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender Mercy. And accordingly, in like Manner, as we our selves have not yet suffered, as some other People have, the Lord now seems to wait, that he may be gracious to us, and have Mercy on us; [Jam. v. 11. Isa. xxx. 18.] and, therefore, that his Goodness and Forbearance may lead us to Repentance. For if so, then shall we experimentally find, that though great Plagues remain for the ungodly, yet whoso put their Trust in the Lord, and turn to him with all their Heart, Mercy embraceth them on every Side. So that when Men are cast down, then shall it be said, there is lifting up, and
God

God shall save the humble Persons ; he shall deliver the Island of the innocent ; and it is deliver'd by the Purenese of their Hands. [Job xxii. 29, 30.] But if still, by our Hardness, and impenitent Hearts, we will heap to our selves Wrath against the Day of Wrath ; then may we expect full Vials of it, and that God will suffer his whole Displeasure to arise ; that he will either appoint, or permit, that what has been often here, may be here again ; that so he will make that very Air, by which we breathe and live, become to us an Occasion of Death ; will make that same Element, which us'd to comfort and refresh our Vitals, to become the Vehicle of Plague and Destruction. This God actually did, no longer since than 1665, when our great Metropolis was made almost desolate ; when dead Bodies without Number were thrown into Carts like Dung, were tumbled into Pits like Beasts ; or, there was no Man left to bury them.

The same as this, now lately has been, and still partly is, the Case of some Places no further off than France : So that the Flying Roll, or Curse, being gone forth there, we their Neighbours have just Ground to dread, 'twill fall on us : For shall the Trumpet be blown in the City, and the People, the sinful People, not be afraid?

Are we not so alarm'd at the Sound, the dismal News, as to stand in Awe, and sin no more ; as to betake our selves to God for Succour and for Safety, by Penitence and Prayer to him, that he would pardon what is past ; that he would protect us from the Terror by Night, and from the Arrow that flyeth by Day ; from the Pestilence that walketh in Darkness, and from the Destruction that wasteth at Noon-Day ? [Psal. xci. 5, 6.] That e'er this come to us, God would say to the Contagion, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther ; or as he did to the destroying Angel, It is enough, stay now thine Hand ?

Of this, the Lord be praised, we have already a fore-boding Omen ; that the Prayers and Penitentials of some pious Persons, as 'tis to be hoped, have already pierced the Clouds, and so far prevail'd with God, as that he has somewhat check'd the Raging of the Pestilence ; and that, as when Phinehas stood up and prayed, so now the Plague has almost ceased ; and now again may the Devotions of God's People compleat the full Deliverance ! However, let us not be too secure, but let the View of what remains, be to us still a Matter of Fear and Humiliation : Considering, that though the Plague decreases, yet it continues still in some Degree ; that while the Rod seems

seems removing, yet it is still hanging over our Heads; and, therefore, tho' the Fury of the Judgment be well-nigh past *abroad*, yet the Sense and Dread of its Threats ought to be still present with us. And seeing the Wisdom of publick Authority has ordain'd this Day to be set apart for a Solemn Humiliation, let us indeed *rejoyce*, but at once with so much *Trembling*, at the seeming Retreat of God's Anger, as, by Prayer and Fasting, to stop the Way to its Return, or its coming home to us; and lest, when having left the *French*, it should then visit *Britain*. For, pray, let us not vaunt our selves, as if by our *own Hand*, or our *own Righteousness*, we have been hitherto preserved; but, considering our Sins, let us not be so *high-minded*, but still fear, that all God's Anger is not yet turned away, but that his Hand is stretched out still. Do we think the People of *Marseilles*, and the Countries near it, were Sinners above all others, because they suffered such Things, as I have been speaking of? I tell you, nay; but except we repent, we shall all likewise perish. 'Tis true, those Sufferers were unhappy in being of a corrupted Church, and because the Gospel-Light did not so brightly shine to them, in their Mother-Tongue, as it does to us. But therefore let us seriously beware, lest the Brightness of our
Light

Light come in to aggravate our Guilt, and so our *Candlestick* be removed, as it has been from other Nations ; where God's Goodness and Forbearance have not been duly seconded : I mean, by *bringing forth such Fruits as were worthy of Repentance*. Though God pleas'd to begin with *France*, yet he may end with us ; may come hither, to *Great Britain*, and also *smite our Land with a Curse*. And, my Brethren, be you assured, that if after so great Mercy and *Deliverance* as we have hitherto experienced, we will continue and go on to do wickedly, we have just Ground to dread, God will be angry with us, till he have consumed us, so that there shall be no Remnant, nor escaping. When God's Hand will not spare, neither will he have Pity : But he will give our Lives over to the *Pestilence*, and consign our Souls to Hell. Then will he say to us in his Wrath : ' Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded : But ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof ; I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh : When your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind ; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you. Then shall you call

‘ call upon me, but I will not answer ; you
 ‘ shall seek me early, but you shall not find me ;
 ‘ for that you hated Knowledge, and did not
 ‘ choose the Fear of the Lord. You would
 ‘ none of my Counsel, you despised all my Re-
 ‘ proof. Therefore shall you eat of the Fruit
 ‘ of your own Ways, and be filled with your
 ‘ own Devices. For the Turning away of the
 ‘ simple shall slay them ; and the Prosperity of
 ‘ Fools shall destroy them. But whoso heark-
 ‘ neth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be
 ‘ quiet from Fear of Evil. [Prov. i. 24, &c.]

*Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant, we may
 all be, through the Merits and Mediation of
 Jesus Christ ; to whom with the Father, and
 the Holy Ghost, be given, as is most due, all
 Glory, Worship, and Obedience, now and ever-
 more. Amen.*

F I N I S

call upon me, but I will not answer; you
shall seek me early, but you shall not find me;
for that you hid knowledge, and did not
chide the fear of the Lord. You would
none of my Counsel, you despised all my Re-
proof. Therefore shall you eat of the Fruit
of your own Ways, and be filled with your
own Devices. For the Turning away of the
Simple shall slay them; and the Proximity of
Fools shall destroy them. But whose heart
rest upon me shall dwell safely, and shall be
quiet from fear of Evil. [Psalm 125, 30.]

Which God of his Justice shall reward, the way
all be, the way of the
Righteous; the way of the
Holy Ghost; the way of the
Glorious Virgin, and of the
Saints.

